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ABSTRACT

This paper considers the narrow goals characteristic of most accountability programs, discusses methods for transcending these limited goals (linking goals to broad society values), and suggests steps that supervisors can take to implement accountability in an open system. The author argues that students, administrators, and teachers must be mutually accountable. The author sets forth such methodologies for linking goals to broad society values as (1) setting noncognitive goals; (2) establishing systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of innovative, open curriculums; (3) evaluating achievement in more than basic skills; (4) providing for more diversity in curriculums; and (5) providing for contemplative as well as analytic thinking. (JF)

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Accountability Which Transcends

by

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ACCOUNTABILITY WHICH  
TRANCENDS

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At the recent National Conference of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, more than a half dozen titles of sessions dealt directly with the topic of accountability. Another half dozen sessions considered aspects of accountability such as evaluation and measuring achievement. And one does not know in how many meetings the subject of accountability was treated in some form. One cannot read books, papers or current periodicals without being aware that the issue of accountability is a hot one!

So what does one say that is new? In the midst of my searching, I opened Gibran's Diary for 1972 to jot down the deadline for the preparation of this manuscript and spotted the following line by Gibran in a section labelled "Talking":

You talk when you cease to be at peace with your thoughts.<sup>1</sup>

The literature on accountability gives much attention to the relationship of goals and achievement of them to costs and personnel, especially in the area of attaining narrowly defined cognitive goals. But a large percentage of conscientious supervisors and teachers feel that the school must be held accountable for more than easily defined and attained cognitive goals. But how? Thus our uneasiness.

### What Do We Need to Transcend?

If the schools are to be concerned that our young be given every opportunity to live productive, satisfying lives, both now and in the future, we need to transcend certain limitations the schools have placed upon themselves.

One critical limitation is the industrial model which permeates much of what we do in schooling. Many educators are concerned about finding alternative models for describing schooling, but for the moment, let us assume that we will stay with the industrial model--that of describing goals, establishing procedures for attaining them, and constructing tools for evaluating whether the goals have been achieved. Within this model what can we transcend?

We can transcend establishing limited goals. We can transcend limiting accountability to only one party within the educational enterprise, and we can transcend setting unnecessary boundaries.

### Transcending Limited Goals

First, we need to transcend our insecurity in goal setting. This insecurity causes us to stay with mundane goals and to forget the capacity of the human spirit to reach levels of aspiration and achievement which no educator probably can foresee. Suppose we were not bound by methodologies and assessment procedures, what goals ought supervisors, teachers, and others concerned for the welfare of children and youth hold? How might goals be stated if we were to base them within philosophical models which transcend the mundane?

For example, consider these goals adopted by the State Board of Education of the University of Pennsylvania in its plan of "Educational Quality Assessment":

Help every child acquire the greatest possible understanding of himself and an appreciation of his worthiness as a member of society.

Help every child acquire understanding and appreciation of persons belonging to social, cultural and ethnic groups different from his own.

Help every child acquire to the fullest extent possible for him, mastery of basic skills in the use of words and numbers.

Help every child acquire a positive attitude toward the learning process.

Help every child acquire good health habits and an understanding of the conditions necessary for the maintaining of physical and emotional well-being.

Give every child opportunity and encouragement to be creative in one or more fields of human endeavor.

Help every child understand the opportunities open to him for preparing himself for a productive life and should enable him to take full opportunities of these opportunities.

Help every child to understand and appreciate as much as he can of human achievement in the natural sciences, the social sciences, the humanities and the arts.

Help every child to prepare for a world of rapid change and unforeseeable demands in which continuing education throughout his adult life should be a normal expectation.<sup>2</sup>

In a later section of the manuscript we shall look once again at the matter of worthwhile concepts to be included in comprehensive plans of accountability.

#### Transcending One-Party Accountability

One of the current problems in many programs and theories of accountability is that programs of accountability are one way. The most common practice is for professional personnel to be held accountable to school boards or publics without reciprocity in relationships. If one accepts the premises of free-will, self-determination, and the individual as the focus of his own decision making, then systems of accountability must provide for plans which include each person and party within the plan. The plan must include answers to the questions:

To whom is this party accountable?  
For what?

The plan of accountability needs to begin with the individual student and specify for which he should develop a plan of accountability. This will mean that at an early age, children should learn to look for alternatives, to consider the consequences of their actions, to think about what a given course of action will mean in terms of small steps, and how his plan will affect himself and others. Obviously to be accountable must be learned. But gradually throughout schooling children can learn to develop and carry out plans of accountability.

Similarly teachers need to think through the responsibilities they have toward children: to know ways in which children might learn; to know the facets of the problem for which they are responsible; to know how to communicate with appropriate public; to know how to approach the development of reciprocal relationships with students, parents, administrators, and supervisors.

The administrative and supervisory staffs have a responsibility to set into motion plans of reciprocal accountability. This means rather direct planning with teachers as to who will make what decisions, how action will be assessed, and how such procedures will be evaluated.

Similarly, supervisory and administrative staffs must plan programs of accountability with school boards, parents, and the general public. The best laid plans cannot be carried out unless school boards see the need of providing adequate resources. Children cannot be expected to achieve certain kinds of competencies within schools unless total communities band together to establish an environment conducive to learning the skills the community deems important. All of us, according to Platt, are "decision-systems," and this must be taken into account in educational planning.

If our goals are to go beyond those of limited cognition, then reciprocity within a system of accountability must be given high priority. Consider the ecological problems with which man is now faced, primarily because he failed to take into account that a reciprocal relation between man and nature must be achieved if either is to survive. Consider the institution of marriage. Most courts are moving toward the position that failure of a marriage is not primarily the fault of one party but is the fault of the lack of reciprocity within the marriage. Consider foreign relations. A master-slave relationship exists among countries unless a cooperative, reciprocal arrangement is worked out. And so it is in education. Until all parties responsible for the education of the child work out reciprocal agreements, except for systems based upon a very narrow range of goals, failure will probably ensue.

### Transcending Unnecessary Boundaries

In talking about accountability, it must be kept in mind that we are talking about accountability in an open society. How much easier it would be to work out accountability systems in closed societies! Yet, if there is any quality of our society that we must seek to maintain, it is openness.<sup>4</sup>

Open systems, however, must be constructed to accommodate to, even encourage the unanticipated. This means that the unexpected in terms of responses must be expected from students, the unexpected in terms of the learning opportunities they provide must be expected from teachers. Obviously the system of accountability must build in conserving elements. But we have already probed this aspect in considerable depth. We do need increased attention as to how to deal with newness and freshness. We are not arguing for irresponsibility but rather for a system which preserves the spirit of excitement and adventure in learning.

### Methodologies for Transcending

Since accountability has inherent in it the concept of assessment coupled with the concept of cost as related to ends, a logical pattern of accountability has emerged which relates goals to outcomes and costs. We are now back to the problem of goal establishment and the linkage of these goals to broader values which a society holds dear to its young.

### Beyond the Cognitive

Most systems of educational accountability frankly state that certain goals are difficult to measure and hence ignore them. However, a few systems have set out to define values which go beyond the cognitive. We have already mentioned the program in Pennsylvania. "Michigan, too, has included in its testing program the measurement of three types of student attitudes: namely, attitude toward learning, attitude toward academic achievement, and attitude toward self. Nebraska is now planning to create an assessment program which, in its first stage, will be concerned only with non academic objectives."<sup>5</sup> According to a report of the Educational Testing Service, Nebraska plans to collect information about "socioeconomic levels and other nonschool influences."<sup>6</sup>

In addition to dealing with a wide range of human behaviors in a system of accountability, we need to learn to deal with the realm of values in a fairly systematic way. All groups, including parents, supervisors, teachers, and students, need to learn to analyze values and their meaning on an operational level. It may well be that a systematic procedure needs to be set up within school systems to deal with concepts of values and their changing nature. Such a continuous study would better enable the establishment of appropriate goals.

### Dealing with the Variables in Open Curricula

Traditionally each discipline has its own mode of inquiry and during the 60's, curriculum workers tended to utilize the mode of inquiry peculiar to given disciplines in gaining knowledge for school subjects.

With the recent renewed interest in humanistic education, and with the related emphasis upon openness, intuition, choice, diversity of activity, and affective domain, the problem of dealing with knowledge within the curricular field becomes greater. Not one discipline, but usually concepts from a variety of disciplines are behind many of the assumptions and practices of curricular based upon humanistic concerns. If the derivation of topics often included in open curricula were uncovered, the roots of these topics would probably be found in a variety of schools of thought. Thus, curriculum workers are confronted with the task of making explicit curricula forms which are best, often ambiguous, multi-disciplinary in origin, and lacking shared conceptual framework among scholars of the field.

In light of these factors, how shall we discuss accountability when the problem of knowledge development is still in an ambiguous state?

One critical way of developing the knowledge necessary to better understand more open curricula is to focus directly upon the variables of the open classroom and attempt to describe them. Dyer says we need,



. . . better measures than we now have of the many factors inside and outside the school that influence students' over-all development, and more particularly better ways of observing and describing what actually goes on day by day in the teaching-learning process. By this I mean we need far better ways systematically monitoring and describing what is really going on behind the facade of fancy labels by which we characterize so many so-called innovative programs like . . . The Open Classroom, the Discovery Method and so on ad infinitum. I am convinced that we can obtain these kinds of information if we have the will to do so.<sup>7</sup>

If we are to understand better the individual within the open setting we need to be willing to deal with the problem of what Platt calls, "Collective Existentialism."<sup>8</sup> We need to be willing to deal with problems of transactional as well as reactional responses.<sup>9</sup> School curricula ordinarily are built upon the concept of reaction to some stimuli by the teacher. In a transactive setting, "individual choice, problem solving and relevancy" are key factors.<sup>10</sup>

In dealing with the variables in open curricula, we must make a number of changes from more traditional approaches. We must move from problems of miniscule importance to those of major import.

We must move from attention to limited numbers of variables to attention upon such variables as persons, materials, time, space, and ideas in inter-relation and interaction.

Our task in the near future is not as much to prescribe as to describe and understand. Hence we need to explain what is going on. We need to work out procedures to describe choice, commitment, involvement, gaining perspective, establishment of priorities, voluntary groupings of peers, effects of multi-age groupings, and effects of utilizing time and space in various ways.

Basically in order to effect adequate constructs of accountability in open classrooms, we need to develop plans which take into account the on-the-spot decisions made both by children and teachers. We need to study these situations in order to build generalizations based upon data about what is happening in the intuitive kind of activity often characterizing good open classrooms.

The outcomes of such study probably would be instruments which would enable (1) description of what is happening, (2) achievement of feedback as to whether intent is congruent with practice, and (3) the enabling of descriptive statements before making prescriptive leaps.<sup>11</sup>

In brief, the task appears to be to make more explicit our value systems, to develop means of describing more precisely what is happening within the complexities of the classroom, and then to develop the means for getting at what ought to be.

### Transcending the 3 R's

Let's assume that the schools will continue to hold themselves responsible for teaching fundamental skills. Let's also assume that techniques are being perfected to assess the achievement of goals related to children's engaging in minimal communication



skills. What other concepts ought supervisors and teachers be concerned about introducing into the school curriculum?

#### From Non-power to Power<sup>12</sup>

Much of the work that has been carried out in urban schools during recent years has indicated that many persons feel as though they have little control over their destinies. Unless persons can determine the degree of control they have over their destinies and the potential for power with other persons, we will continue to have the powerless or the powerless in society. Lack of power in any area is poverty. According to Platteau, "A good definition of poverty is the inability to command events that affect one's life. This defines financial poverty and political, intellectual, and spiritual poverty . . . .<sup>13</sup> How many teachers and children lack power and hence are in a state of poverty? Consideration should, therefore, be given to moving persons

From	Non power	to	Increased power over one's immediate destiny	to	Power with others in the individual's world
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#### Diversity within Commonness

The past few years have seen a general crumbling of bureaucratization within our society, at least as far as the young are concerned. No longer enchanted by that which many of our institutions have to offer, many of them have explored alternatives to traditional patterns of middle class America. Life styles are becoming more idiosyncratic, more diverse. Schools have attempted to cater to diverse learning styles through programs of individualized instruction. Yet, in the attempt to honor diversity, have we failed to honor commonality, a sense of community?

Curricula in the future will probably give attention to diversity within commonness, the right to be different and yet to cooperate and collaborate when such efforts lead to intended ends. The human spirit is not designed to flicker alone nor to be smothered by the cloak of sameness. Persons need the opportunity to pull off in order to determine what is of worth to them. They need periods to be with others so that the likenesses and differences of person can enhance and strengthen each other. Teachers and supervisors need to determine those aspects of programs at all levels where likenesses and differences of perception and action are most critical.

Commonness + diversity in collaboration	=	new commonness	+	new diversity
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#### Personal Crisis as the Route to Social Identification<sup>14</sup>

A curriculum needs to account for the fact that no person is going to be exempt from problems, indeed from crisis--type situations. Realizing that all persons will encounter puzzling and difficult periods in life, assistance can be given to the person handling his own responses so that he is more effective as a person and in turn is able to identify more compassionately and sympathetically with all of mankind. Personal anguish or crisis is an inward process. Its effects can be analyzed through observing a person's identification with the sufferings of others. This quality can be found in any culture. The Russian poet, Yevtushenko, says, "A feeling of responsibility, not only for myself but for our whole country, came upon me and I felt its crushing weight on my shoulders."<sup>15</sup> Frankl, the Viennese psychiatrist, made his concentration camp days tolerable through

utilizing his crisis experience to reach new depths in his personal thinking and in his persons in his outreach. <sup>16</sup> Any serious teacher or supervisor attuned to the complexities of today's living must indeed encounter periods of crisis. How he uses crises to enhance his understanding of others is what is important.

Thus, we can explore personal crisis as a means for social identification through considering the following:

Personal crisis	followed	Analysis of crisis	leads	Increased identi-
	by	in terms of human	to	fication with
		condition		others

### Balancing Dailiness with Stress

Benjamin DeMott talks about the "texture of dailiness," the routine of life in which we all participate. <sup>17</sup> Dailiness gives balance to life and makes the moments pass in a regular manner. Some persons spend their time primarily in activities which they would characterize as dailiness, yet others spend their time in opportunities calling for high degrees of risk, stress, and involvement. Questions can be raised as to individual preference for routine as opposed to freshness and intensity. Why do moments explode for some persons and lag for others?

All persons need a balance of routine versus freshness, but what is balance for one person may not be balance for another. A need exists to study the essence of involvement and the degrees to which persons utilize stress in that which they decide to do. <sup>18</sup> We need increased awareness of what causes supervisors to break through the barriers of dailiness which may become humdrum to new levels of imagination and involvement.

What is routine?	+	What is stressful?	in order to ascertain	What arrangement of experience cause optimal levels of involvement?
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### Analytical and Contemplative Thinking

Persons need the opportunity to probe areas in depth. Such probing ordinarily calls for skills in analysis. On the other hand, persons need the opportunity to explore issues horizontally. This type of exploration may be referred to as contemplation. This mode of thought allows for the unanticipated to pop forth and the subsequent sense of wonder to ensue. <sup>19</sup>

If the curriculum is primarily technical and fragmented, persons may learn certain analytical skills. If the curriculum is primarily contemplative, the individual may see the whole but have little knowledge of the parts. If persons are to establish their own visions and project the steps necessary to bring vision to reality, then persons need sound experiences in analytical thinking coupled with integrative experiences so that the parts can be combined into meaningful wholes. We need to give attention to knowledge which can best develop each of these sets of skills.

Analytical Skills	+	Contemplative Skills	=	Wonder Based in Reality
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### What Can Supervisors Do?

Let's assume for a few minutes that the assumptions and concepts discussed on the previous pages of this manuscript are accepted. What can supervisors do who are interested in a plan of accountability within an open system? Here are some areas to consider and possibly upon which to act.

1. Deal with the problem of goal setting. How should curricular goals be established? Who will be in on the goal setting? What are appropriate goals for children and teachers in this day of rapid change?
2. Consider the problem of reciprocal accountability. Does it make sense? Devise a means of getting such a program of accountability into action. Since costs are ordinarily included in plans of accountability, how will costs be figured when a variety of parties are included in the plan of accountability.
3. In a system in which freshness and newness are prized, how do we measure the establishment and achievement of objectives in terms of costs?
4. What is the place of narrowly specified behavioral objectives in a system which gives high priority to helping persons go beyond the expected?
5. Consider establishing some in-depth studies which would enable teachers and supervisors to look closely and carefully at the phenomena peculiar to open curricula. Study the methodology necessary to design the instruments useful for data gathering in open classrooms.
6. Analyze existing instruments or the nature of teaching. How might these instruments be utilized in plans of accountability? What new instruments need to be developed?
7. Discuss the phenomena of power. What procedures need to be developed to assess the teaching of it?
8. Discuss the concept of involvement or any of the other concepts discussed in the section "Transcending the 3 R's." How can teachers better understand these concepts? How can we help the public come to understand them and accept them as critical to school programs? How shall we move toward plans of accountability which take into account the teaching of these concepts?
9. Teachers and supervisors need experiences in the areas which they attempt to open up to others. What kinds of experiences ought we plan for supervisors and teachers so that they can explicate from experience such concepts as:
  - Analytical and contemplative thinking?
  - Dailiness and stress?
  - Personal crisis as the route to social identification?
  - Diversity within commonness?
  - Non-power and power?

These and many other questions need to be explored in programs of supervisory accountability.

### What Is Lost and Gained in Educational Accountability?

By following some of the recommendations of the previous pages for educational accountability, we must take certain losses. As soon as attention is given to a wider range of human behavior, our instruments for measurement ordinarily become

more sparse and less precise. In addition, we have a more difficult time linking cost to personnel, materials, and goals. The traditional ways of reporting may no longer be adequate. Complexity is substituted for neatness.

A number of gains, however, are apparent. The basic assumption that only in rare conditions can one person make another person do something underlies our ideas. Other systems of accountability are ordinarily built upon the assumption that persons have more control over the behavior of another than they indeed do. In the same vein, each party within the system of accountability has more autonomy and independence but at the same time more responsibility. Plans for incorporating what is not yet known are built into the system. In addition, the linkage of behavior to the complexities of the environment are taken into account.

Dunham says, every person is worth doing something for.<sup>20</sup> Frequently the schools have taken the position that we need to do something to the person. If we accept Dunham's assumption, then systems of accountability need to consider the person and his setting. At the present time we may not have all the tools for refined systems of accountability. Such systems would allow for the dynamic interplay of man and his world. But we cannot stop with our present conceptions of accountability. We must move forward to systems which are futuristic, reciprocal in nature, and accommodating to the complexity of human nature.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Gibran, Kahlil. Diary for 1972. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971. Originally from Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960. First copyright 1923.

<sup>2</sup> Welsh, James. Educational Quality Assessment: Pennsylvania Looks at Its Schools. Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1971. Although these objectives can be criticized for being too global and for utilizing such terms as "understand" and "appreciate," nonetheless they take into account major fundamental skills. It should be noted that Pennsylvania has worked out a fairly comprehensive plan for assessing educational outcomes.

<sup>3</sup> The concept of individual "decision systems" permeates the book John P. Platt, Perception and Change: Projections for Survival, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1970.

<sup>4</sup> For a provocative discussion of open education, see Anne M. Bussis and Edward A. Chittenden, Analysis of an Approach to Open Education, Interim Report, Princeton: Educational Testing Service, 1970.

<sup>5</sup> Educational Testing Service in collaboration with Education Commission of the States and Education Resources Information Center. State Educational Assessment Programs. Princeton: Educational Testing Service, 1971, p. xiii.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>7</sup> Dyer, Henry S. "The Role of Evaluation in Accountability." Proceedings of the Conference on Educational Accountability. Chicago, June, 1971, William W. Turnbull, Chairman, Princeton: Educational Testing Service, 1971, p. F-12.

<sup>8</sup> Platt, op. cit., p. 118.

<sup>9</sup> For an exploration of this concept see R. Vance Peavey. "Cybernetic Educational Design: An Example." The Journal of Educational Thought, 3:15-19, April, 1969.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>11</sup>Credit is due to two of my colleagues of the College of Education, University of Maryland, Professors Charles Johnson and Jessie Roderick and the many graduate students of the College of Education working in the Center for Young Children where techniques for research in a natural setting are being developed. Among the many scholars interested in this form of producing knowledge are Roger G. Barker, Ecological Psychology, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968; S. J. Hutt and Corinne Hutt, Direct Observation and Measurement of Behavior, Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1970; E. P. Willems, "Toward an Explicit Rationale for Naturalistic Research Methods," Human Development 10: 138-154 (1967); E. P. Willems and Harold L. Raush, eds., Naturalistic Viewpoints in Psychological Research, New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1969. This form of research would give some powerful insights in developing systems of accountability.

<sup>12</sup>For consideration of the concept of power see the following works: Louise M. Berman, Beyond Confrontation: An Analysis of Power, Kappa Delta Pi, forthcoming; Viktor E. Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy, New York: Washington Square Press, 1963; Ivan Illich, Deschooling Society, New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1970; Martinello, Marian, Making Education Relevant, Kappa Delta Pi, forthcoming; Marcus G. Raskin, Being & Doing, New York: Random House, 1971; Gerald Weinstein and Mario D. Fantini, Toward Humanistic Education: A Curriculum of Affect, New York, Praeger Publishers, 1971.

<sup>13</sup>Platt, op. cit., p. 156.

<sup>14</sup>For a discussion of the possible positive effects of crisis, see Kazimierz Dabrowski, Personality Shaping as Positive Disintegration. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968.

<sup>15</sup>Yevgeny Yevtushenko. A Precocious Autobiography. Translated from the Russian by Andrew R. MacAndrew. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1963.

<sup>16</sup>Frankl, op. cit.

<sup>17</sup>DeMott, Benjamin. Surviving the 70's. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1971, p. 30.



<sup>18</sup> At the time of this writing, Professor Jessie Roderick and Mrs. Barbara Littlefield, both of the Center for Young Children; University of Maryland, are investigating nonverbal behaviors of young children which are indicators of involvement. On the topic of stress, see Samuel Z. Klausner, ed., Why Man Takes Chances: Studies in Stress-Seeking. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1968; and Hans Selye, M.D., The Stress of Life, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1956; Howard J. Parad, editor, Crisis Intervention: Selected Readings. New York: Family Service Association of America, 1971.

<sup>19</sup> For an exciting treatment of the concept of wonder, see Cornelis Verhoeven, The Philosophy of Wonder: An Introduction and Incitement to Philosophy. Translated by Mary Foran, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972.

<sup>20</sup> Barrows Dunham. Ethics Dead and Alive. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971, p. 128.